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House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION

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October 14, 2004

The Honorable Robert W. Ney, Chairman
Committee on House Administration
1309 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Ney:

I am writing to you today to urge you to hold a hearing immediately after the upcoming elections to examine the allegations of voting irregularities that have been brought to my attention by a number of our colleagues and the media. These concerns range from the status of Help America Vote Act (HAVA)-required, state-wide registration information; the availability and counting of provisional ballots, to the fear that heightened security efforts could intimidate voters.

Examples of the allegations that have been raised across the country include the erroneous purging of voters from the rolls in Florida, and the rejection of voter registration forms in that state because of overly restrictive technical rules that disproportionately impact minority voters. In Missouri and in other states, lawsuits have been filed because of the way provisional ballots are being counted. Also, there are issues in Missouri about the integrity of which overseas votes will be counted. In Nevada, voters face the possibility of being erroneously purged under the guise of National Voter Registration Act of 1993, because of alleged partisan politics. In Ohio, among other issues there, the Secretary of State has created confusion by first asking his office to reject voter registration cards not printed on 80-pound paper (these cards are normally printed on 20-pound paper); and then issuing a conflicting directive that he will not enforce the law. Reports indicate that in Minnesota, the Secretary of State is using HAVA funds to print posters that could lead to voter suppression in the name of security. Finally, questions have been raised across the country about the requirements regarding identification at the polls.

These are examples of incidents that have the potential to negatively affect the entire electoral process, and damper the HAVA, National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) and other election and voting rights laws under the jurisdiction of our committee.

Therefore, I encourage you to schedule a series of hearings following the November election. These hearings should help us learn how states have implemented HAVA and other election laws, and review how the first post-HAVA election was conducted. I believe that we should invite the state and local officials who are involved in conducting the elections, such as the Secretaries of State of Florida, Ohio, and Nevada, to serve as witnesses. We may also want to invite officials from the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security to examine their roles in the election as well.

My staff and I will provide whatever assistance you require in order to proceed. The hearings will hopefully contribute to the balance of the public debate, and to give citizens faith the election was conducted fairly and that our election laws were implemented correctly.

I thank you in advance for your consideration of this matter. I look forward to working with you to clarify and enhance the record on the implementation of HAVA and other election laws, and to recognize the efforts of election officials who comply with the law and maintain electoral integrity.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John", with a stylized flourish extending from the bottom of the "n".

JOHN B. LARSON

Ranking Minority Member

JBL/th